

Press & Dakotan

Vermillion Landlord Charged With Fair Housing Violations

WASHINGTON -- A South Dakota landlord has been charged with violating the Fair Housing Act for refusing to rent to families with children and for advertising in a discriminatory manner.

The charges allege that Paul Hasse, owner and manager of an eight-unit apartment building in Vermillion, refused to rent to families with children and advertised that discriminatory preference several times in a newspaper.

HUD's investigation of showed that Hasse placed ads in the Vermillion Broadcaster that specified, "no smokers, pets, minors, or deadbeats."

Similarly, when a fair housing watchdog group had a tester with children contact Hasse to inquire about renting the apartment, Hasse informed her of his policy, "no pets, no smoking, no kids." Hasse reiterated the same policy to another tester, and current tenants also confirmed the policy.

The Fair Housing Act makes it illegal to discriminate against persons based on their race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability or familial status.

Housing discrimination charges heard before an administrative law judge carry a maximum civil penalty of \$11,000 for a first offense, in addition to actual damages for each complainant, injunctive or other equitable relief, and attorneys' fees. Sanctions can be more severe if a respondent has a history of housing discrimination. Parties also have the right to elect to have their cases heard in federal district court.

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